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**Testimony on SB 322: AAC
The Qualifications of Department of Children and Families Employees
Select Committee on Children**

As the Chair of the Department of Social Work at Western Connecticut State University, I urge you to amend the bill to require that all DCF employees at the baccalaureate level earn a degree from an accredited undergraduate social work program. Six of such programs are housed in universities in Connecticut.

You will no doubt hear from colleagues who will support this amendment by citing the strengths of the undergraduate social work curriculum based on rigorous requirements that students demonstrate competency across ten areas (Council on Social Work Education, 2008). Social work curricula are designed to ensure that students learn and master these competencies. Moreover, at our university, students who do not demonstrate developing competency are counseled to other degree programs in the university. This gate-keeping role is designed to ensure that only competent social work practitioners enter professional practice in the challenging field of child welfare generally, and DCF-related practice specifically.

The Department of Social Work at Western Connecticut State University maintains a strong relationship with the Danbury DCF office and each year up to six of our seniors receive field practicum training through that office. Our students engage in hands-on field practicum learning sixteen hours per week from September to May. Those learning experiences are complemented by seminars and course work that seamlessly enhances practice competency generally and also ensures that students' professional behavior is consistent with the National Association of Social Worker's Code of Ethics (National Association of Social Workers, 2008). The Code of Ethics provides the foundation for all social work practice. Social work majors learn about the values and principles of social work practice through a freshman to senior year continuum of coursework. These values and principles are essential to the efforts of DCF workers as they navigate the many challenges of working with complex DCF client systems. I would argue that no other undergraduate degree programs prepare their students as well for DCF work precisely because the work requires not only sound critical analysis but also the ability to apply this analysis within the context of values and ethical principles. Adherence to these values and principles along with demonstrated competency across the ten core areas noted above ensures the best possible care of the children and families that DCF serves.

I urge you to pass this bill with an amendment requiring that all future hires of DCF workers at the undergraduate degree level have a professional social work degree (BSW). Moreover, the amendment should also require that all future DCF hires at the graduate level have a professional social work degree from an accredited Masters in Social Work (MSW) program.

Thank you.

Rob Veneziano

References

Council on Social Work Education. (2008). *Educational policy and accreditation standards*. Alexandria, VA: Author

National Association of Social Workers (2008). *NASW Code of Ethics (Guide to the everyday professional conduct of social workers)*. Washington, DC: NASW.